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JANUARY MEETING, 1888.

THE stated meeting was held on the 12th instant, and the Rev. Dr. ELLIS occupied the chair.

The record of the preceding meeting was read by the Recording Secretary.

The accessions by gift to the Library during the month were reported by the Librarian.

The President communicated a letter which had come into his possession, and was dated "Litchfield, Oct. 30, 1808," in which the writer speaks in the highest terms of Yale College and of the Litchfield Law School.

Mr. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL presented for the Cabinet a small engraving commemorative of the death of Washington, found by Lord Arthur Russell, M.P., in a laborer's cottage in Surrey. As it was published in London, it seemed to him of enough interest, showing as it does the respect felt for Washington by a portion at least of the people of England, to be added to the other Washington relics now in the possession of the Society. The design represents an obelisk inscribed with Washington's name upon it, beside which stands a figure of Freedom with the American flag and the Cap of Liberty.

Professor HAYNES communicated the following paper upon Apocryphal Runic Inscriptions:—

A newspaper report of a recent lecture upon "Prehistoric Maine," by a distinguished antiquary of that State, has called to mind the outcome of a previous attempt to establish by archæological evidence the truth of the alleged early visits of the Northmen to the shores of New England.

At a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the year 1856, Dr. A. C. Hamlin, of Bangor, Maine, called attention to a supposed Runic inscription, of which he exhibited a cast, that is to be found upon a ledge on the little islet of Menana, which lies a cable's length to the

south of the island of Monhegan, off the coast of Maine.¹ Dr. Hamlin regarded this inscription as the work of "some illiterate Scandinavian," with a very imperfect knowledge of the Runic characters. But he proceeded to argue in favor of Merry-meeting Bay, in the neighborhood of the island of Monhegan, rather than of any spot to the south of Cape Cod, as having been the locality of Leif Ericson's station in Vinland. Dr. Hamlin's account of the inscription was duly copied by Mr. Schoolcraft into his voluminous description of the Indian tribes of the United States, where it is illustrated by a fac-simile of the inscription, and a steel engraving representing it in its true position upon the island.² Shortly afterwards Dr. Hamlin forwarded a copy and a cast of the inscription to the Society of Northern Antiquaries, at Copenhagen, with the hope of obtaining from them some light upon its signification. That learned body, however, made no attempt at interpreting it, although they admitted its genuineness, and reproduced it in handsome Runic characters, together with an engraving of the locality where it is to be found, differing from that in Schoolcraft's work.³ After this, interest in the inscription seems to have gradually died out; and Dr. Daniel Wilson even ventured the suggestion that possibly it might be only a natural formation in the rock.⁴ And such, after all, turns out to be the case.

In the summer of 1885 Mr. G. H. Stone, of Portland, Maine, published the results of a careful study of the inscription, made on the spot. He says:—

"When one first sees the inscription rock, he cannot fail to notice that the appearance is as if a tablet had been prepared upon the surface of the rock, not horizontally, but obliquely. There are two parallel furrows about one-half an inch deep, and eight inches apart; and the so-called letters are on this 'tablet.' . . . Examination shows that this apparent tablet is simply the exposed edge of a fine-grained vein, which penetrates the coarser grained rock obliquely. . . . The parallel furrows, which inclose the so-called inscription tablet, are simply furrows of weathering at the sides of the vein. The supposed letters are com-

¹ Proc. of the Amer. Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1856, part ii. p. 214. Proc. of Am. Academy of Arts and Sciences, May 28, 1851, vol. ii. p. 267.

² Schoolcraft's History of the Indian Tribes of the United States, vol. vi. p. 610, pl. 50.

³ Mémoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord, May 14, 1859.

⁴ Prehistoric Man, vol. ii. p. 99.

posed of straight furrows intersecting each other obliquely, so that most of them are some modification of the letters V and X. . . . At the base of the furrows I invariably found a crack in the rock, though sometimes not readily without the aid of a magnifier. There are two systems of these joints, — one nearly vertical, the other nearly at right angles to the sides of the vein. Nearly all the furrows forming the supposed inscription belong to these two systems of joints. . . . Most of the joints are filled with a film of oxide of iron. . . . It is evident that the ‘inscription’ is a freak of surface erosion. The furrows are the result of weathering along joints.”¹

It is singular what a striking resemblance the story of the Monhegan inscription bears to that of the famous Rock of Runamo, in Sweden, which created quite a commotion among the Scandinavian antiquaries and men of science several years ago.

Saxo Grammaticus, a learned antiquary and historian who flourished in the twelfth century, relates, in his history of Denmark, that King Waldemar I., his contemporary, who was also distinguished for his interest in antiquarian studies, had made an ineffectual attempt to have a supposed inscription copied and deciphered, that was to be found upon a rocky footpath which runs by the sea-shore near the village of Hoby, in the south-eastern part of Sweden.² Müller, one of the latest editors of Saxo’s work, in a note upon this passage, says that “in a spot overgrown with trees and bushes, called by the inhabitants Runamo, there are to be seen on the ground two parallel lines, resembling a serpent in shape, and about sixty-eight feet in length. These lines inclose a space filled with a black rock, different in character from the mass of the rock of which it forms a part. In this black rock there occur numerous holes and fissures; but whether they have been caused by the forces of nature, or by the hand of man, can scarcely be determined at the present day.”³ But in a subsequent note, Velschow, who completed the edition after Müller’s death, states that, in order to have the question settled, if possible, Müller proposed to the Royal Danish Scientific Society, in 1832, to appoint a special commission of three learned men to investigate the question

¹ Science, vol. vi. p. 124.

² Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica (edit. Müller et Velschow), vol. i. pt. i. præf. p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, note 7.

afresh, and to have a new delineation of the rock made.¹ This was done; and a mineralogist, Forchhammer, was appointed upon it. He made a report, stating that there were two kinds of fissures, some natural and some artificial; and he had two drawings executed, — one exhibiting all the fissures as they now exist, the other showing the artificial markings by stronger lines. These latter Finn Magnussen, another member of the commission, who enjoyed a well-merited reputation for his knowledge of Runic inscriptions, unhesitatingly pronounced to be Runic characters, but declared himself to be unable to determine their signification. After puzzling over them for ten months, it occurred to him to reverse the customary method of reading Runes from left to right, and to try what he could make of them by attacking them from right to left. In two hours' time all became as clear as daylight. There came out a metrical inscription, written in alliterative verse. It contained a prayer to Odin and the other gods for victory for the Danish king, Harold Hildetand, in his struggle with Sigurd Ring, King of Sweden. This was the famous battle of Bravalla (Brarwel), about A. D. 776, in which Harold fell. But alas for so much learning wasted! In 1838 the eminent Swedish chemist, Berzelius, visited the locality, and after due examination pronounced all those fissures to be natural forms, which Forchhammer had called the work of man. The latter replied in a second publication, maintaining his former position; and other physicists took part in the strife. But in 1841 Sven Nilsson, the father of Prehistoric Archæology, gave in his assent to Berzelius's conclusions; and three years afterwards the late eminent authority upon Northern antiquities, J. J. A. Worsaae, after a long and patient investigation, and a new delineation of the rock, concurred in this view.²

This settled the question of the Rock of Runamo, in the minds of European scholars; but in a work published in this country more than twenty years subsequently, I observe that the author of the article upon "Runes" still refers to it as a genuine inscription.³

Let me conclude with a brief notice of a Runic inscription

¹ Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica (edit. Müller et Velschow), vol. ii. p. 26.

² Bibliographie de l'Archéologie Préhistorique de la Suède pendant le xix^e siècle, nos. 38, 41, 59, 68, 79, 83-86. Cf. an article by Charles Rau in "The American Antiquarian," vol. i. p. 39.

³ The New American Cyclopædia, *sub voce*.

of quite a different character, reported to have been discovered in this country some years ago.

In the "New York Weekly Tribune" of Jan. 31, 1867, there appeared an article, copied from the "Washington Union," containing an account of a remarkable discovery that had just been made in the neighborhood of Washington, D. C. An inscription in Runic characters, overgrown by moss, had been found cut upon a huge rock, that marked the site of an ancient grave, under the shadow of a venerable pine. The site was at a short distance below the Falls of the Potomac. In the grave were discovered three teeth and a fragment of bone, which crumbled to powder when exposed to the air, and also three shapeless bronze objects, and two coins of the Lower Empire of the tenth century. All these objects were said to be deposited in the Museum of the Smithsonian Institution. The fortunate discoverers were Professor Lesqueraux the geologist, Professor Brand of Washington, and Dr. Boyce of Boston. When deciphered, the inscription consisted of six verses, reading as follows : —

" Here lies Syasi, the Blonde,
Of East Iceland;
Widow of Holdr,
Sister of Thorgr, by her father . . .
Aged twenty-five years.
God rest her soul. 1051."

This wonderful story was duly copied into "Le Tour du Monde," and was eagerly accepted by certain European scholars interested in the study of American antiquities, by whom it was given a prominent place among the proofs, drawn from the Icelandic sagas principally, of the visits of the Northmen to this country in the eleventh century.¹ Naturally, it was at once recognized by historical students in the United States as one of those elaborate hoaxes which have gained for us such an unenviable notoriety; and very soon the perpetrator was discovered. He was a clerk in one of the administrative departments in Washington, who had actually gone to the pains of cutting the characters upon the stones where they were discovered.²

¹ Gaffarel, *Étude sur les rapports de l'Amérique et de l'ancien continent avant Christophe Colomb*, Paris, 1869, p. 251. Gravier, *Découverte de l'Amérique par les Normands au x^e siècle*, Paris, 1874, p. 137.

² Prof. Joseph Henry, in *Historical Magazine*, March, 1869, 2d ser. vol. v. p. 177.

Mr. WINSOR referred to a statement which he made at the meeting in October about a manuscript map supposed or represented to have been drawn by Franklin and Hartley in 1783, and to have defined the bounds between the United States and Canada at the conclusion of the peace. Since Mr. Winsor made that statement he has tracked the map, and now has it in his possession, it having been sent to him for temporary use by Mr. L. Z. Leiter, of Washington, its present owner. It proves to have no connection whatever with the treaty of peace; but to be simply a plotting out of the proposed new States between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi, as planned in Jefferson's inoperative Ordinance of 1784, the precursor of the established Ordinance of 1787. Being found among Hartley's papers, it was probably sent to him by some one in America, if not by Franklin from Paris, though the script on the map is not in Franklin's handwriting. Washington speaks of the proposed new divisions, in which he is known to have been interested, as a project practically assured of being carried out; and it may not be generally known that a map was engraved for Francis Bailey's "Pocket Almanac" for 1785, showing the divisions, and bearing the outlandish names which Jefferson, in his vagary, attached to ten of its States,—names which have been much laughed at since. Bailey's plate was used again in an "Introduction to the History of America, designed to instruct American youth in the elements of the history of their own country, with a correct map of the United States," which was published at Philadelphia in 1787. The name of the engraver, H. D. Pursell, is retained on the plate; but the original publisher's name is removed. The book is said, in a manuscript addition to the title on the copy in Harvard College Library, to have been written by John McCulloch. The map was re-engraved in Germany, even to the American eagle and the United States shield in one corner of it; and this last representation is found in Johann David Schöpf's "*Reise durch einige der mittlern und südlichen vereinigten Nordamerikanischen Staaten*" (Erlangen, 1788).

The Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP read a letter which he had received from John McClellan, First Lieutenant of the Fifth Artillery, and dated "Fortress Monroe, Va.," in which he speaks of a valuable letter of Washington, written to Patrick Henry, offering to him the position of Secretary of State. This letter has never been published; and the owner would like to

dispose of it, together with a hundred others of a miscellaneous character, and nearly three hundred autographs. The price asked for the whole collection is \$2,000, and for the Washington letter alone, \$500.

Mr. FOOTE exhibited an etching of Francis Bernard, Governor of Massachusetts from 1760 to 1769, which was taken from the painting by Copley in possession of Christ Church College, Oxford. No portrait of the Governor has been known by antiquaries here to exist; and a descendant in England directed attention to this one, and a copy of it was obtained through the kind offices of the Librarian of the Bodleian. When the Library of Harvard College was burned, Jan. 24, 1764, the Governor and Council occupied it (on account of the small-pox being in Boston), while the Representatives met in the room below. Inasmuch as the fire took place while the building was thus occupied, the Governor called upon the Legislature to replace it; and a grant of money accordingly was made, the Governor himself subscribing for this purpose, besides giving more than three hundred volumes, as well as his own portrait, which was probably painted in 1765.

Mr. ADAMS said: —

I have in my hand a letter from my grandfather, President J. Q. Adams, which has recently come into my possession. It has a certain value in connection with incidents in the history of Boston at the time it was written. Apart from any personal interest which may attach to it, it seems therefore properly to belong to this Society.

At the time it was written Mr. Adams was in his twenty-fifth year. He was practising law in the town of Boston, having been admitted to the bar the previous year. His father was at Philadelphia, serving as Vice-President during the first administration of Washington. The letter was written to Thomas Boylston Adams, a younger brother of J. Q. Adams, who was with his father. It has since, through very nearly a whole century, been in the possession of the children of Thomas Boylston Adams, one of whom, Miss E. C. Adams, now herself almost an octogenarian, recently came across it among other old papers, and sent it to me. In my turn I give it to the Society; and trust that it may, on

account of its historical interest, find a place in full in our Proceedings.

Boston, February 1st, 1792.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have been for more than three weeks indebted to you for two very agreeable Letters, which Mr. Otis brought from you. They would not have remained so long unanswered but for a variety of circumstances which have concurred to engross all my time during that period. It is possible that you may have observed in the Centinel about a month since, that a Committee of 21 inhabitants of this Town was chosen in town-meeting, to report to the town what measures it might be proper to take in order to reform the present state of the police of the town; and you may have noticed that my name was among those of several of the most respectable characters in this Town upon that Committee; if you read the Centinels in course as they arrive, you must have seen that this Committee reported a certain plan, which after being debated in Town meeting for three days was finally rejected by the votes of 700 men against more than 500 who were in favor of its adoption. If you have noticed all these circumstances, it is probable you may feel some degree of curiosity to know something further upon the subject: You will perhaps wish to be informed what it is, that has thus agitated the whole town of Boston these five or six weeks, how it happened that I was placed upon this same Committee, and why the report was rejected—I will tell you, at the risque of fatiguing you with a tedious narration, which you may throw aside if it should become intolerable.

The Government of this town, in its corporate capacity, like that of all the other Towns in this Commonwealth, is a pure democracy; all the affairs of the town are transacted by the inhabitants in town meeting assembled, or by committees appointed by them; excepting certain powers which are vested in the Select-men, and which are very immaterial. The by-laws of the corporation are supposed to be enacted by the whole body of the people, and to be put in force by trials before Justices of the Peace. — In consequence of this system, the fact is, that no by-laws are enforced at all, and the inhabitants are subjected to various inconveniences, for the want of some internal regulation. Several attempts have been heretofore made to introduce a reformation, and to induce the inhabitants to request for a City charter. Those attempts have always been ineffectual, and the inconveniences have continued. About 6 weeks since, a town meeting was called, where after a debate upon the subject, in which the objects to be reformed were fully laid open and explained, the Committee, which I have already mentioned, were chosen. — It was a subject upon which I felt altogether uninterested, having been so short a time an inhabitant of the Town, and suffering personally very little from the inconveniences which had

occasioned the complaints from whence that town-meeting resulted. I happened however quite accidentally to be present at the meeting and was nominated by Dr. Jarvis, to be a member of the Committee, and was accordingly chosen. He was indeed the last man in this town from whom I should have expected such a nomination, and I cannot very readily account for his motives. Dr. Welsh asked him what his object was; and he answered, "that this Country were under great obligations to my father, and he thought it very proper that some notice should be taken of his Son; that he observed I generally attended the town-meetings, and appeared to interest myself in the affairs of the town; that I was a sensible young man" (excuse the vanity of the relation) "and he wished to hear my sentiments upon this subject." — I mention these circumstances because it will I believe, be somewhat surprising to your father, as it was to myself, that the first public notice ever shown me by the town of Boston should proceed from the nomination of Dr. Jarvis. I may now proceed to the transaction of the business itself. — The Committee met several times, and after discussing the subject amply and deliberating with great coolness and harmony agreed upon the plan which was proposed, and which you have perhaps read. The agreement was unanimous, with one exception, which was Mr. B. Austin, commonly called Honestus; he set his face against the reform from the beginning and did not agree to one article of the report. All the rest, though many of them differing widely as the poles, in most of their political sentiments, were fully agreed upon this point. When the report was debated in town-meeting Austin opposed it with the utmost degree of vehemence and absurdity. "It was to destroy the liberties of the people; it was a resignation of the *sovereignty* of the town; it was a link in the chain of Aristocratic influence; it was intended in its operation to throw the whole burden of taxation upon the poor." In short his speeches were such a farrago of nonsense and folly that it was hardly possible to imagine they could have any effect at all. On the other hand, Sullivan and Jarvis and Otis with several other Gentlemen argued the whole subject over and over with more popular eloquence than I ever saw exhibited upon any other occasion; yet upon the final Question, the result was as I have stated, seven hundred men, who looked as if they had been collected from all the Jails on the continent, with Ben. Austin like another Jack Cade, at their head outvoted by their numbers all the combined weight and influence of Wealth of Abilities and of Integrity, of the whole Town. — From the whole Event I have derived some instruction, and above all a confirmation of my abhorrence and contempt of simple democracy as a Government; but I took no part in the debate. — It was indeed a very good opportunity, that was offered me, of opening a political career, especially as I had been put upon the Committee; but for a variety of

reasons I chose at least to postpone to some future period, my appearance as a speaker in town meeting; the principal of which was a want of confidence in myself, which operated most forcibly upon me. I hope, however, the time will come, when I shall not be so much oppressed by my diffidence.

But the sequel of the story is no less curious than the rest. The day after the question was decided, Russell the printer demanded of Austin, in the public street, satisfaction, for a personal insult he had received from him at the town-meeting; and upon Austin's refusing to give satisfaction, Russell treated him with every possible indignity, and gave him a severe corporeal bruising: upon which Austin spread abroad that Russell was the mere instrument of *aristocratic* revenge, and that he did not act from resentment for his own injury, but at the instigation of a few rich men, who were enraged at seeing the success with which he had advocated the cause of *the people*.—And such was the obsequious servility of his rabble, that in consequence of this suggestion, several hundreds of them assembled the same evening; threatened to pull down Russell's printing office, and the houses of the *aristocrats* who wished to enslave the people, and actually paraded the streets with clubs, and with violent menaces for two or three hours: however they did no real mischief, and the matter seems now to have blown over pretty generally; though the partizans on both sides are still warm and ready to quarrel. I have from the beginning taken the part of a spectator rather than that of an actor in the scene, and I think the whole affair has given me some additional knowledge of human nature.

The present is quite a busy time in our political world; there are several other subjects upon which I could write you other letters as long and as tedious as this; but I must reserve some of my information for your father, to whom I am ashamed not to have written this long time. I intend soon to give him some account of another occurrence, which has made not a little political agitation in our atmosphere.

I have not much more to say to you respecting myself. Our Court of Common Pleas have sat again since I wrote you; I argued one more cause, and was successful. I gain my causes, but I get no business; that is at as low an ebb as ever, but I am tolerably habituated to the lot, and say, with Ancient Pistol, "*si fortuna me tormenta, il sperare me contenta.*"

The Petition from the North Parish in Braintree is hitherto successful. The Committee of the General Court before whom I mentioned to you our having argued the point, reported in favour of the petitioners: the bill for incorporating the town of *Quincy*, has past the Senate and is now before the House of Representatives. Hichborn has been indefatigable in his opposition to the business in every stage of it, but has

not yet been able to defeat us.—The Question will not be finally decided till next week.

Mr. Cranch has been in town about a fortnight upon this affair, and attending the Court of Common Pleas. He has recovered to all appearance from his sickness, though he does not look so healthy, or in such spirits, as he was wont. Our other friends are all well.

Your brother,

J. Q. ADAMS.

Mr. R. C. WINTHROP, Jr., called attention to the fact that in May, 1880, the Society had agreed to have carefully arranged by an expert, and bound in a separate volume, for permanent preservation, a collection of sixty-eight manuscripts of great value, chiefly in the handwriting of Governor John Winthrop the elder, and bearing dates from 1620 to 1648, which had then recently been presented to the Society by Colonel William Woolsey Winthrop, U. S. A., and his two sisters. By some forgetfulness, no steps were taken in the matter; and after the lapse of nearly eight years, the papers have recently come to light in their original package. On motion of Mr. Winthrop, it was therefore voted that the income of the William Winthrop Binding Fund, or such portion of it as may be necessary, shall be set aside for the purpose of suitably binding these manuscripts; and that Mr. Smith, Judge Chamberlain, and Mr. R. C. Winthrop, Jr., be a committee to superintend their arrangement.

Mr. WINSOR alluded to the different ways in which lawyers and historical writers look at the same topic, as illustrated in a recent pamphlet which he had received; and Mr. HILL made further remarks upon the subject.